

REMARKS

Claim 11 was canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Thus, claims 1-10 and 12-15 remain pending in the present application.

The indication of allowable claims 4-8 was appreciated. The additional indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 3, 10 and 12-15 was also much appreciated. By this Amendment, claim 2 was amended into independent form, thus placing claims 2 and 3 in condition for allowance, along with allowed claims 4-8.

As for the prior art rejections, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 9 and 11 under 35 USC 1.103(b), with claim 1 being rejected as obvious in view of Applicant's prior art as described in connection with Figure 10 of the application taken together with Yoshiuchi, et al. (U.S. 5,701,573), and claims 9 and 11 being rejected as obvious in view of the foregoing Applicant's prior art taken together with Fujimoto, et al. (U.S. 5,659,871). However, it is submitted that the cited prior art does not teach or suggest all the features recited in the present claimed invention.

For instance, the control arrangement of the present invention (as recited in independent claims 1 and 9) is effective not only to prevent damage to the recording paper caused by a pulling force between the scuff rollers and the tractor pins, but also to prevent the tractor pins from unduly shifting within the indexing holes, thereby providing high-quality printing results.

According to the claimed control arrangement, back tension rollers which are disposed *upstream* from the tractor are caused to move at a greater circumferential speed than the transfer speed of the tractor thereby to create slack in the paper engaged by the tractor during the period after the paper starts to move but before image printing is begun.

No such teaching is contained in the Yoshiuchi, et al. reference. Instead, this patent merely suggests creating slack in recording paper at a position between registration rollers LL and pretransfer rollers TL so that variations in web tension caused by the web-pulling force effected by rotation of the fixing device 35 can be absorbed. (See, e.g., column 12, line 63 to column 13, line 17).

Similarly, the grounds for arguing the rejection based upon Fujimoto, et al. is that claim 9 specifically recites a control arrangement effecting the pulling force generated between scuff rollers and back tension rollers, the latter of which are disposed upstream of a tractor. No such relation exists in the organization of Fujimoto, et al. wherein there are no back tension rollers but, instead, the pulling (tension) force on the web before printing begins, occurs solely between the scuff rollers 13 and the tractor 12.

For at least these reasons, the present claimed invention patentably distinguishes over the cited prior art. Accordingly, these rejections should be withdrawn and an early Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, Applicant respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension or any other fees that may be due with respect to this paper may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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